

Marshall Owens, Curator of the USS Arizona Memorial in Casa Grande, Arizona at the home of Paul Goodyear on Saturday, September 11, 2004 in the morning conducting a follow up oral history with Paul Goodyear concerning his experiences on the USS Oklahoma.

Marshall: Paul, could you please tell me about the events when you first saw the attack on the Oklahoma.

Paul: Well, my crew and I had just relieved the 4 to 8 watch on the morning of December 7 and we were just kind of getting settled in knowing that it was going to be a Sunday and probably be a light message day and not too much work to do. So Red (?) and I just happen to be standing over on the starboard wing casing the joint and seeing what was going on.

All of a sudden we looked up to starboard, maybe a mile or so ahead and off to the right, there was a line formation of about 4 or 5, 6, 8 planes. Of course, we glanced and didn't register any number but we saw them approach and as they got pretty much ahead of us. We saw the first one drop a bomb...the second one. One of us remarked, "They must be dropping bombs on Sand Island." That was not an unusual experience at that time because our little fighters and bombers when they took off from Ford Island for a bombing exercise, if they didn't expend their bomb, they would jettison it over there before landing and it would save landing with a heavy weight underneath the plane; and, those bombs could be recovered and reused.

The third bomb had just left the third plane, maybe it wasn't over 10 or 20 feet down you know, a red flame just shot up right almost directly ahead of us. I had a pair of 750 binoculars on and I put those to my eyes and that meatball came right into focus. I turned to Red and said "God damn Japs, how did they get here?" We tried to call the quarter deck but the quarter deck line was busy. So I just walked and somehow got to the portside of the signal bridge. The anti-aircraft crews were down there just doing the same as we were, just "lazying" around and not doing too much. I yelled down to them. This fellow with his head only a couple of inches below my head - probably maybe not even that - I said "Hey, shoot the damn Japs down." I can still see the guy putting his arms of Kimble on his hips. He's got his back right to the 1010 dock facing right up at me and he says, "Oh, Flags you had too much to drink last night." Well, I imagined about that time one of those fish went right underneath his legs and I kind of doubt if he accused me of anymore drinking. I don't know who it was or what happened but I can still remember the guy looking up me and saying "Oh, Flags, you had too much to drink last night."

Now late in '42 and being in the flag, I don't recall the exact ship I was on because the flag moved from ship to ship. We had been assigned to make a

bombardment; to accompany a task force on a raid up in the North Pacific, Marcus or some place. And since the ship hadn't been out in the South Pacific for well over a year, they routed us a little farther east and we were scheduled for three days work in the navy yard at Pearl. As we came in, as curious as I was, I could see the Oklahoma just sitting there in Fox 5; not quite the ship I remembered, but still it had to be her. And so, I told the Admiral I'm going to go over and see if I can recover some stuff I left aboard ship so I took the ferry over to Ford Island. After we got into the navy yard and I took the ferry over the Ford Island and went down there. Fortunately, there were some officers still working on the ship that I recognized or they recognized me or not, I had no idea. But anyway, I just walked up to them and said "Hey, can I go aboard and recover some stuff from my locker?" Well, I can remember practically the whole crew just looking at each other and finally one of the officers (and I'm almost certain it was Commander Benson), he just shook his head yes.

Somebody handed me a great, big, long flashlight it must have 6 or 8 batteries all in a line. So I headed towards the ship at that time, it was just a 2 x 12, I'd about 5 to 8 inches above the water it just went from the shore right out to the ship and there had been a hole that opened up in the ship right where that little walkway ended so I went through there. I still don't know how I did it, but I did, and found my way down to my compartment which was just behind Turret #2 on the deck right immediately below the armor deck. Well, I found my way down there and to get into the compartment as in all navy ships, you had to raise your foot about 3 to 10 inches to step in. I put my right foot in and as I did, that flashlight which was very handy because it was absolutely, utterly pitch, pitch, pitch, black, black, black down there; it was just no light. That's why I say I found it down there and I don't know how I did, but I did. And as I put my right foot down on the deck, that light just happened to, which I was holding in my left hand, just happened to brush along the deck of the compartment. Well I saw something down there white but I didn't.

So I took the light and flashed it all over the compartment and it was a fairly good size compartment because both the signal man and radio man shared the berthing areas which was right outside Radio 1. I could see all the bunks were down in the room, the compartment was just absolutely blank - no bunks, no nothing in there. Now whether my locker was still there which is maybe another 25 - 30 feet forward of the ship. Then I put my light down on the deck and there were bones, bones, bones, piles of bones, jumbled up bones, bones of every shape and configuration that you can imagine. Well at the time, I had a much stronger stomach and a better physique than I do now. I just kind of looked at that thing, well, I don't know, but I looked at that pile of bones. I had come back aboard ship to recover a \$130 plus my future wife's wedding ring. For some reason, the sight of those bones

changed my mind. I never put my left foot into the compartment; I just backed out and walked away. You can walk away, but you can't forget.

Marshall: Do you remember the number on the compartment? The compartments had numbers.

Paul: (Laugh) I don't even remember my name back then. No, I don't but it can be looked up, sir, because if you noticed on a ship's drawing right in the center of our compartment and of course in the center of the ship about a foot of Turret #2 extended into our compartment. So the compartment was like this (rectangular) but there was a round protrusion that came in.

Marshall: This was aft of Turret #2?

Paul: This was the back, yes, the aft section of Turret #2 and my locker was the first locker. Our lockers were three high and I had the middle locker in the first tier right next to Turret #2 on the forward section of our compartment.

Marshall: Was that the quarter/starboard on the ship?

Paul: That would be the starboard side of the ship but basically damn almost close to the middle because I'm sure the farthest indentation of the turret was right smack dab on the keel. And it wasn't as big - it took up a small percentage of that bulkhead. So I doubt if it was more than... I'm almost a 100 percent certain it wasn't eight foot so that would be 4-foot on each side, starboard and port side. I don't think it was...I don't recall it as being 8 feet, I'd say it was 4 or 5 feet. But that's all it was.

Marshall: The bones in the compartment, I'll come back to this real fast, that compartment was probably not a battle station, was it?

Paul: In itself, no, but remember the radio man slept on the port side that was their half of the compartment and Radio 1 was on the outside bulkhead right there...right over the torpedo blisters if you follow me. So in it of itself, it was not a battle station, but this thing happened so much; I know from kids that were down there. Many of the kids were down there getting ready for liberties, some of them probably sleeping Sunday morning, reading, writing, doing whatever you do on a day off and that was two divisions - the signal men and the radio men. Now, I know some of the signal men tried to get up but some of the signal men were ordered to stay below the armor deck and they did stay below the armor deck; and, that was one reason why there were so many bones down there. And of course, there were radiomen that were assigned to Radio 1 and they were also and any of the radio man weren't on watch were ordered the same as the signal men were, to stay below the armor deck and when that hatch in the

armored deck slammed shut, they were dead because that thing weighed a ton. It took 3 men, 2 boys and 15 hoists to raise that damn thing. So that's why there was...I have no idea how many men there were but there was an awful lot of bones.

Marshall: How many men do you think there were in each division – the signal and radio?

Paul: I don't know...We kind of gone back over it back in our minds a bunch of signal men and we come up with a range of 30 or 32. Now Henry Long has a list of all of the radio men and I think his...and of course, his again, is made from memory like ours is. And I think there's probably 35 to 40 men something like that. You figure that maybe half of the men were taking a shower, like 4 of us were on watch in the signal gang and there were some radio men down in the other radio stations in the ship, and there were guys probably just maybe some of them were out visiting some guy in some other department or they hadn't gotten back from breakfast yet. But I wouldn't be at all surprise if they were 35 to 45 men in there. I have no idea; any number I give you would just be a conjecture and open to all kinds of disputation.

Marshall: In normal events when everyone was called to battle stations, would that have included everybody in both divisions? Would they have some place to go normally?

Paul: Absolutely, absolutely. Now some of the radio men would stay there and man Radio 1 but every, every signal man his station was out of that area it was out back in battle aft or on the signal bridge. So the fact that they were told to stay under cover...

Marshall: I guess the speed of the attack had probably something to do with it, too.

Paul: No question about it, no question about it. There's no place in the blue book or anything like that or the blue jacket's manual, or the officer's deck log or deck proceedings, or anything like that, that ever prepared anybody for a ship to turn over in 10 minutes. You can't prepare for that... You can't even think about it.

Marshall: Well thank you Paul, I'll add that to your oral history.